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OCI No. 2474/83

**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
14 November 1963**

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Sihanouk's Concerns

1. Beginning with a highly emotional speech on 5 November, Sihanouk has suggested that he is about to curtail relations with the West, move closer to the bloc, and move rapidly toward the socialization of the Cambodian economy.

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3. In his 5 November speech he threatened to reject all western aid in favor of reliance on the bloc unless the emissions of Radio Khmer Serei ceased by year's end. This radio operates from clandestine transmitters [redacted]

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[redacted] operated intermittently during the past several years by the small dissident Cambodian movement known as the Khmer Serei (Free Cambodia) [redacted]

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Leaders of the group are two arch-rivals of Sihanouk: Son Ngoc Thanh, Cambodia's Prime Minister in 1945; and Sam Sary, boy wonder of Cambodian postwar administrations until his fall from political grace in 1958.

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4. The Khmer Serei constitutes a motley assemblage of only a few hundred ill-equipped and poorly trained mercenaries. It has no discernible following inside Cambodia and has little more than nuisance potential from without.

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5. As an anti-Sihanouk instrument used in the abortive Day Chhun coup plot of late 1958 and early 1959, the Khmer Serei reached the zenith of its power in terms of arms and supplies.

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despite the movement's meager potential. This time his fears may well have been sharpened by the military takeover in Saigon, which he undoubtedly ascribes to US sponsorship. Sihanouk's latent suspicion of US intentions toward his controversial neutrality stance may have led him to conclude that there is a chance that the Khmer Serei will again be used to attempt his overthrow. He may see in a rejuvenated counteroffensive against the Viet Cong by the new Saigon regime, a danger that sooner or later the US and South Vietnam will come to the conclusion that Cambodia's neutrality stands in the way of complete victory.

7. The Khmer Serei problem, while a serious one, may in fact be more symptomatic than causal in terms of Sihanouk's attitude. Sihanouk basically views Chinese Communism as inevitably the dominant force in Southeast Asia and, accordingly, is careful to maintain friendly relations with Peking. In a more immediate sense, Sihanouk believes that a military victory cannot be won against the Viet Cong and that the only slim hope of preventing a complete Communist takeover in adjacent South Vietnam is by a neutralist solution. Toward this end, he reiterated last week, a proposal for a neutral belt to include Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam.

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8. We would hesitate to dismiss Sihanouk's concerns or threats. His fears

are deep-seated and reflect historical animosities. He is also probably sincere when he says neutralization is the only hope for Southeast Asia. But his basic interests are the preservation of Cambodia's independence and the royal house and we doubt that he would go very far in giving the bloc free run inside his country.

9. Before the current flare up he had already accepted three Soviet MIG-17's, one MIG-15 trainer, and 24 AAA pieces. He may accept more military equipment from the USSR and Communist China. But we doubt that he will wish to become principally dependent on these sources for economic and military assistance.

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